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AREA 88™

by KAORU SHINTANI

BIWEEKLY

SCANNED BY HIKARU

MISSION 6:

A BLUE MIRAGE

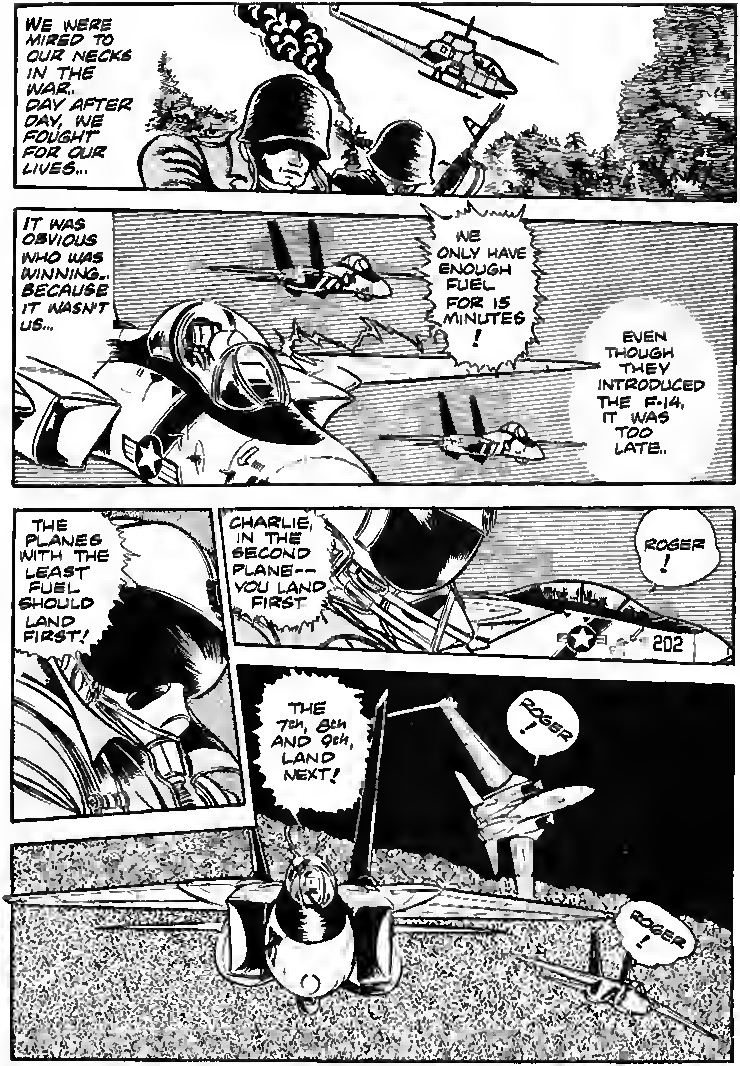
HEY, JOHANSEN! WE CAN SEE THE LIGHTS OF HOME!
VF-84

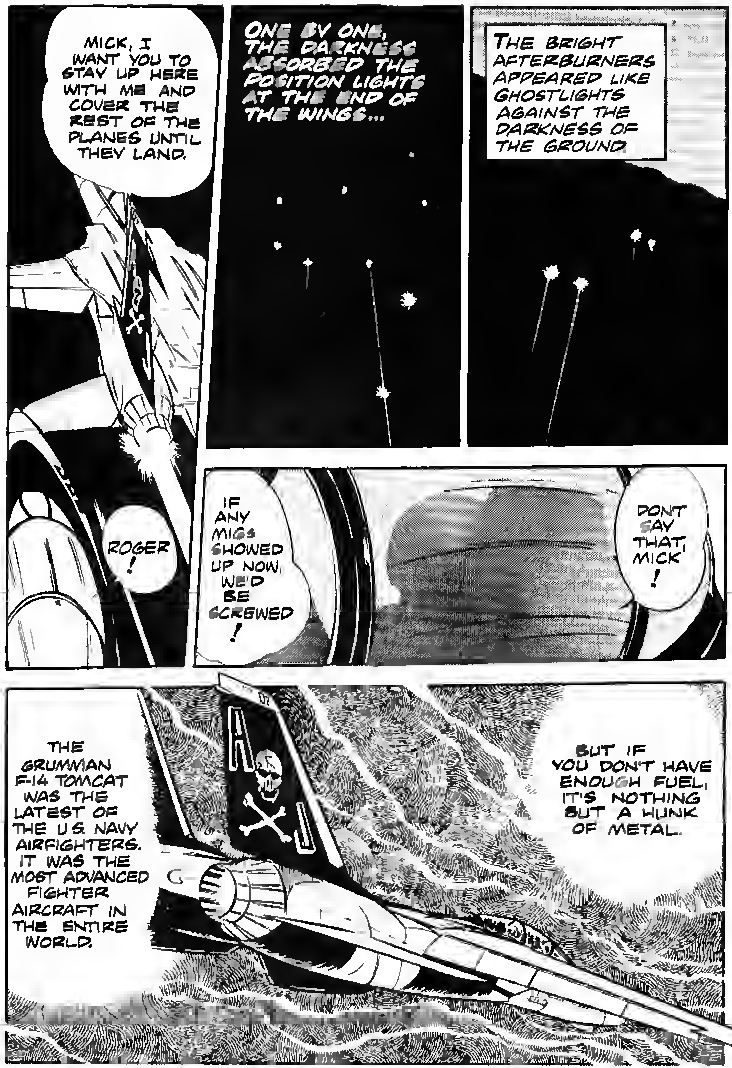
BREEE...
DOH!T
BRRAUK
BRKOOM

400
AHOOGA
AHOOGA
THE SECOND AND THIRD ELEVATORS HAVE BEEN CLOSED!
CRASH LANDING!
CRASH LANDING!
FIRE CONTROL REPORT TO THE FLIGHT DECK IMMEDIATELY!

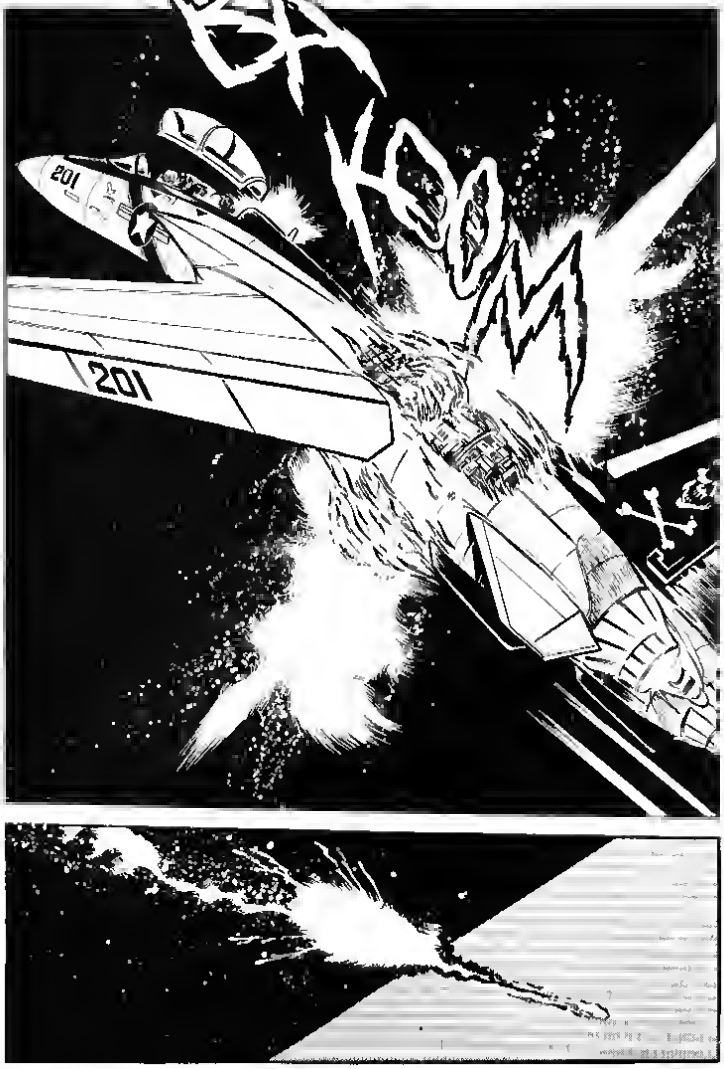
SIDEZOOM
VIETNAM, 1972
202
TOWER TO FLIGHT VICTOR FOXTROT EIGHT-FOUR.
DUE TO A DECK FIRE, YOU ARE DENIED LANDING ACCESS!!!
YOUR ORDERS ARE TO PROCEED TO THE DA NANG MARINE BASE GOOD LUCK!
GOD DAMN IT!

OKAY, MEN, WE'RE OFF TO DA NANG. DON'T FALL BEHIND!
208
SHAAA
204
MICK, DO YOU THINK THOSE GUYS SURVIVED THE CRASH?
I HAVE NO IDEA..
WE'VE BARELY GOT ENOUGH FUEL TO MAKE IT TO DA NANG.
BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT THEM WORRY ABOUT YOURSELF!

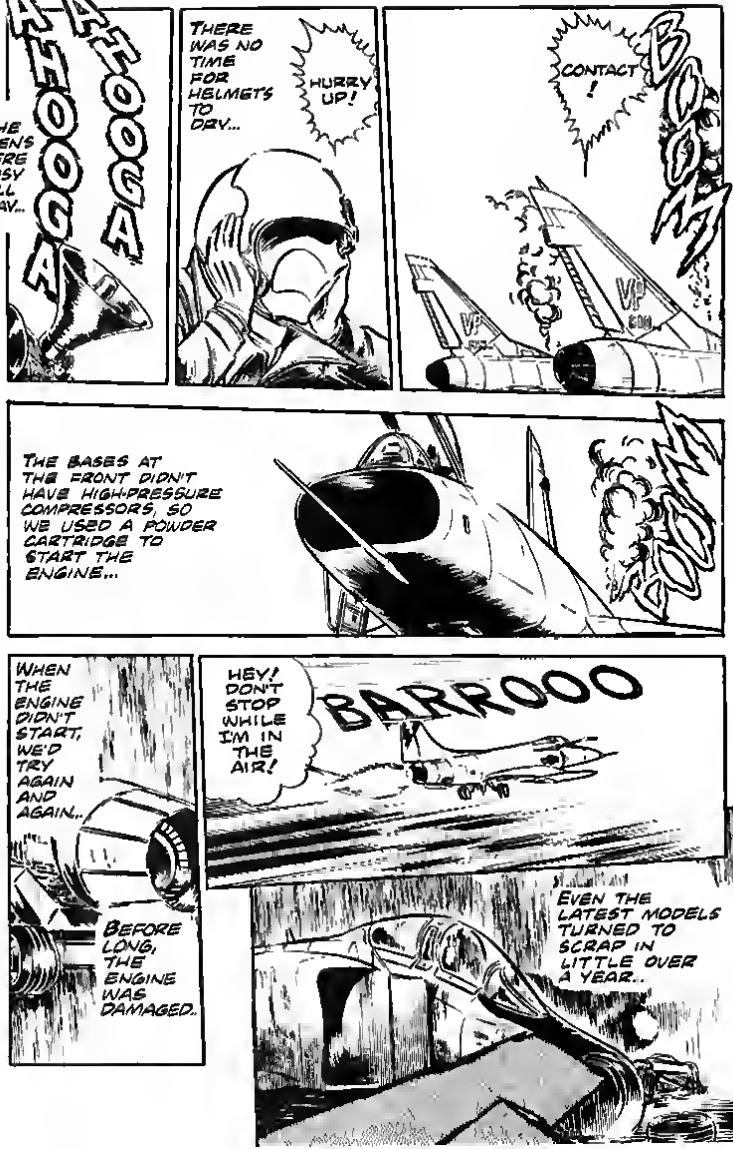

WE WERE MIRED TO OUR NECKS IN THE WAR. DAY AFTER DAY, WE FOUGHT FOR OUR LIVES...
IT WAS OBVIOUS WHO WAS WINNING.. BECAUSE IT WASN'T US...
WE ONLY HAVE ENOUGH FUEL FOR 15 MINUTES !
EVEN THOUGH THEY INTRODUCED THE F-14, IT WAS TOO LATE..
THE PLANES WITH THE LEAST FUEL SHOULD LAND FIRST!
CHARLIE, IN THE SECOND PLANE-- YOU LAND FIRST
ROGER !
202
THE 7TH, 8TH AND 9TH, LAND NEXT!
ROGER !
ROGER !


MICK, I WANT YOU TO STAY UP HERE WITH ME AND COVER THE REST OF THE PLANES UNTIL THEY LAND.
ROGER!
ONE BY ONE, THE DARKNESS ABSORBED THE POSITION LIGHTS AT THE END OF THE WINGS...
THE BRIGHT AFTERBURNERS APPEARED LIKE GHOSTLIGHTS AGAINST THE DARKNESS OF THE GROUND.
IF ANY MIGS SHOWED UP NOW, WE'D BE SCREWED!
DON'T SAY THAT, MICK!
THE GRUMMAN F-14 TOMCAT WAS THE LATEST OF THE U.S. NAVY AIRFIGHTERS. IT WAS THE MOST ADVANCED FIGHTER AIRCRAFT IN THE ENTIRE WORLD.
BUT IF YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FUEL, IT'S NOTHING BUT A HUNK OF METAL.

ALL THE PLANES HAVE LANDED EXCEPT OURS.
MICK, IT'S YOUR TURN. THANKS FOR STAYING WITH ME.
IF THE RUNWAY WERE A LITTLE BROADER, WE COULD LAND AT THE SAME TIME, IN FORMATION.
YEAH, TOO BAD WE CAN'T SHOW OFF TO THE MARINES...
SEE YOU SOON.
I'LL HAVE A COLD ONE WAITING FOR YOU.
SHOOM
THAT WAS THE LAST TIME I SAW THE [illegible] PLANE...
THE LAST SOUND OF HIS VOICE CAME OVER MY RADIO...
CAPTAIN, MISSILE'S COMING !!
EEAAHH !!


BA
KOOM
201
201

IT WAS A SKYRAIDER, ONE OF OURS, THAT FIRED THE MISSILE...
BRUUUU
BASHOOM
YOU BASTARD!! I'M GONNA KILL YOU!!
COOL IT, MAN. HE'S AS GOOD AS DEAD ALREADY!
DON'T STOP ME, MICK!!
HE WAS CRAZY ON HEROIN
SHIT!
UNREASONABLE OPERATIONS, NIGHT RAIDS, FLYING AT LOW ALTITUDES IN ABSOLUTE DARKNESS-- YOU CAN'T DO THESE THINGS WITH ORDINARY NERVES...
UNLESS YOU WERE BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY TOUGH, YOU COULDN'T SURVIVE THERE...
AND THE ONES WHO COULDN'T HANDLE IT TURNED TO DRUGS...


AFOOGA AFOOGA
THE SIRENS WERE BUSY ALL DAY..
THERE WAS NO TIME FOR HELMETS TO DRY...
HURRY UP!
CONTACT !
BOOM
THE BASES AT THE FRONT DIDN'T HAVE HIGH-PRESSURE COMPRESSORS, SO WE USED A POWDER CARTRIDGE TO START THE ENGINE...
FLOOD
WHEN THE ENGINE DIDN'T START, WE'D TRY AGAIN AND AGAIN..
BEFORE LONG, THE ENGINE WAS DAMAGED.
HEY! DON'T STOP WHILE I'M IN THE AIR!
BARROOO
EVEN THE LATEST MODELS TURNED TO SCRAP IN LITTLE OVER A YEAR..

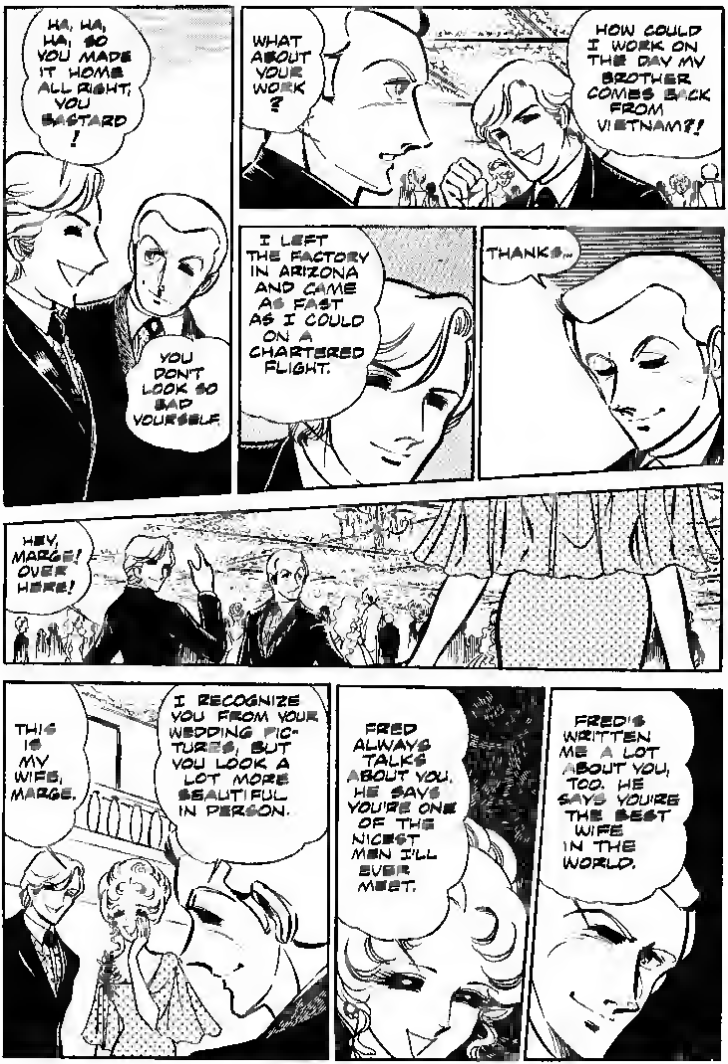
NEW YORK
BING
Shoooosh
LEAP

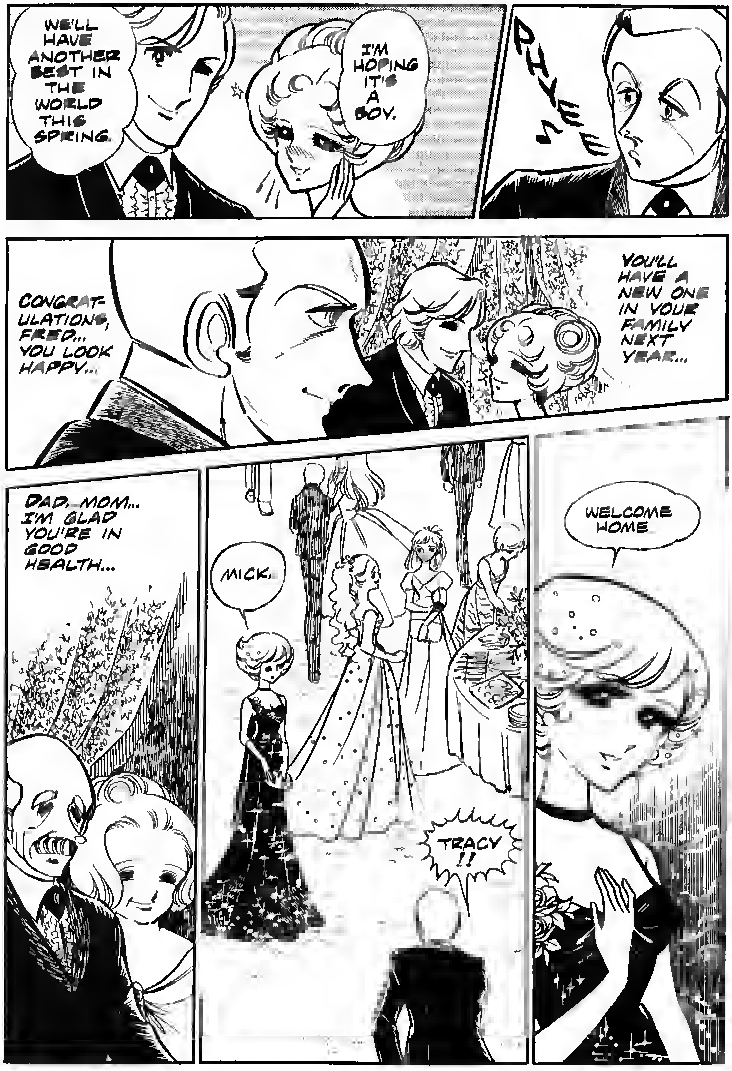
IS THE PRESIDENT IN?
DO YOU HAVE AN APPOINTMENT?
DOES A SON NEED AN APPOINTMENT TO SEE HIS DAD?
I'LL GO IN
?!
WHAT? ...YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT. TELL THEM I'LL ATTEND CRELAND'S BOARD MEETING.

I'M BACK, DAD
MICK!
WHEN DID YOU GET BACK?!
MY BOY ;sob; YOU--YOU FINALLY CAME BACK...
PLEASE DON'T CRY, DAD I'M BACK AND I'M ALIVE WHAT MORE DO YOU WANT?
DID YOU CALL YOUR MOTHER?
NO-- I CAME HERE RIGHT AFTER MY DISCHARGE.
YOU'RE STILL A BAD BOY, MICK...
MISS MITCHELL, I'M GOING TO GO HOME.
PLEASE CANCEL ALL MY APPOINTMENTS FOR THIS AFTERNOON...
..HOW ARE YOU GOING TO EXPLAIN? WELL, PLEASE MAKE UP SOME EXCUSE, OKAY?
I'LL MAKE US A MARTINI, DAD.

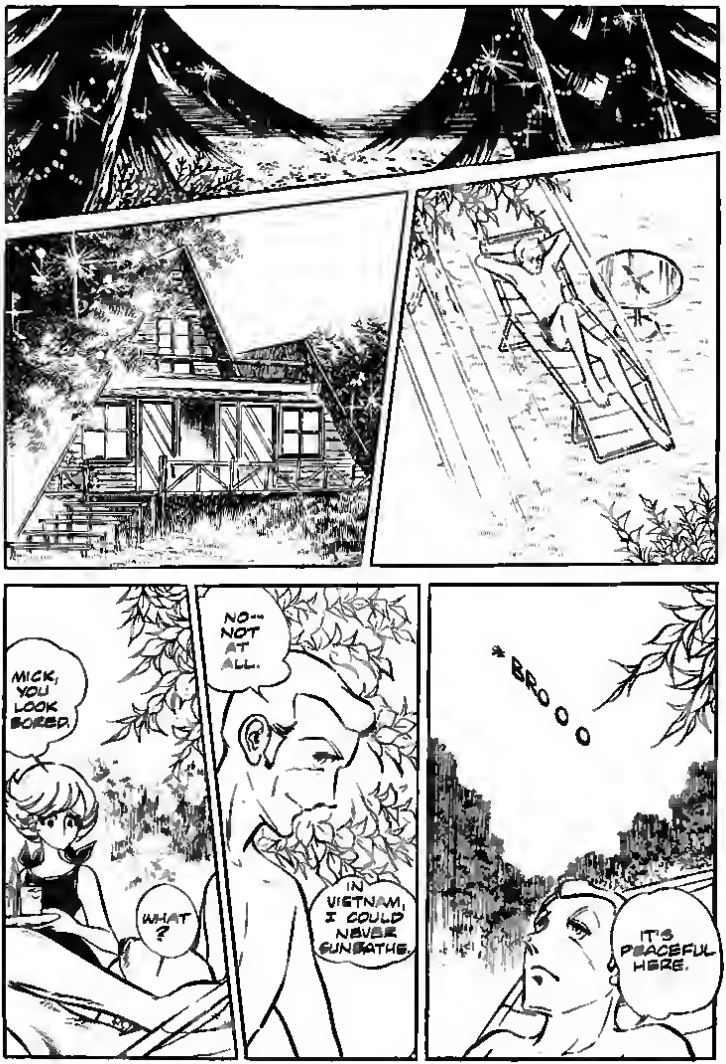
TING
GULP GULP
AHHH
IN VIETNAM, WHEN YOU FINISH YOUR FIRST GLASS, YOU HEAR THE ALARM
THE ENGINES START ROARING AND EVERYONE STARTS SCREAMING AND...
...IT'S QUIET TODAY
YEAH... THIS IS AMERICA-- NOT VIETNAM.
THIS IS A LAND AT PEACE...

MICK !
FRED.


HA, HA, HA, SO YOU MADE IT HOME ALL RIGHT, YOU BASTARD!
YOU DON'T LOOK SO BAD YOURSELF.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR WORK?
HOW COULD I WORK ON THE DAY MY BROTHER COMES BACK FROM VIETNAM?!
I LEFT THE FACTORY IN ARIZONA AND CAME AS FAST AS I COULD ON A CHARTERED FLIGHT.
THANKS...
HEY, MARGE! OVER HERE!
THIS IS MY WIFE, MARGE.
I RECOGNIZE YOU FROM YOUR WEDDING PICTURES, BUT YOU LOOK A LOT MORE BEAUTIFUL IN PERSON.
FRED ALWAYS TALKS ABOUT YOU. HE SAYS YOU'RE ONE OF THE NICEST MEN I'LL EVER MEET.
FRED'S WRITTEN ME A LOT ABOUT YOU, TOO. HE SAYS YOU'RE THE BEST WIFE IN THE WORLD.


WE'LL HAVE ANOTHER BEST IN THE WORLD THIS SPRING.
I'M HOPING IT'S A BOY.
PHYEE
CONGRATULATIONS, FRED... YOU LOOK HAPPY...
YOU'LL HAVE A NEW ONE IN YOUR FAMILY NEXT YEAR...
DAD... MOM... I'M GLAD YOU'RE IN GOOD HEALTH...
MICK.
TRACY !!
WELCOME HOME

WELL... I'LL REST FOR A WHILE THEN DAD'S GOING TO FIND ME A GOOD JOB IN HIS COMPANY.
BROOO
HA HA. WHEN I HEAR THE SOUND OF A PLANE, MY BODY REACTS AUTOMATICALLY.
I STILL HAVE THE HABITS OF THE BATTLE-FIELD.
THIS ISN'T A BATTLEFIELD, MICK. RELAX.
YOU'RE RIGHT, TRACY AND YOU'RE THE LIVING PROOF.
MICK...


MICK, YOU LOOK BORED.
WHAT?
NO-- NOT AT ALL.
IN VIETNAM, I COULD NEVER SUNBATHE.
*BROOO
IT'S PEACEFUL HERE.

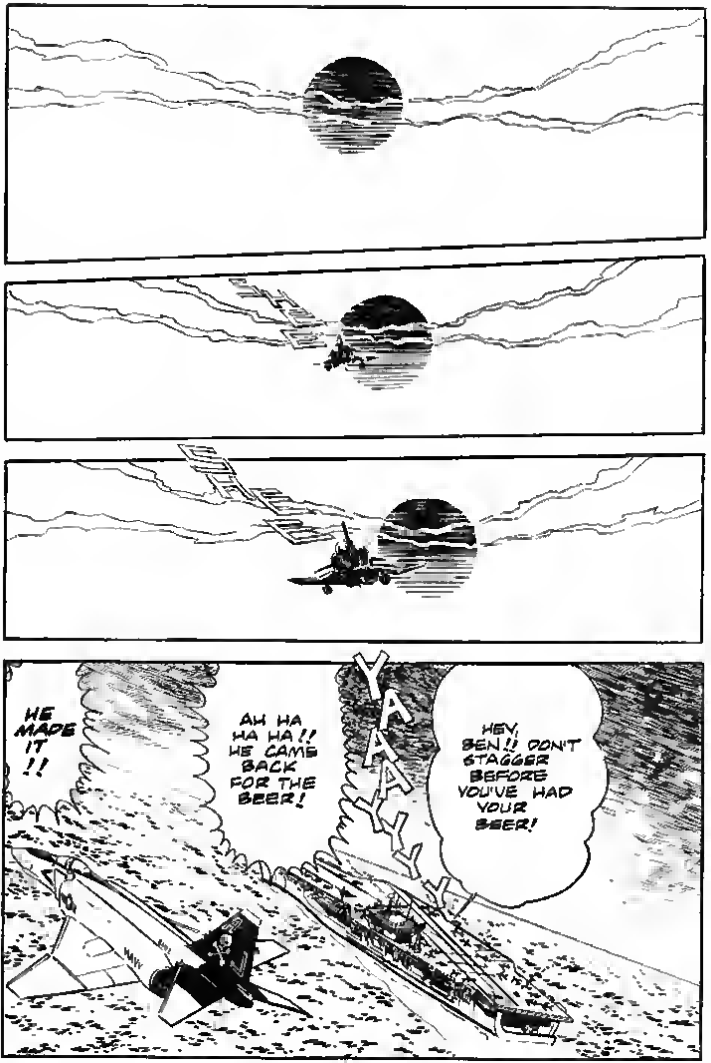
YOU'RE ALWAYS LOOKING AT THE SKY.
LOOK AT ME ONCE IN A WHILE.
TRACY...

I CAN'T STAND DEALING WITH SO MANY FILES AND PAPERS.
WELL... WHICH ONE OF THESE FILES IS FOR THE SALES DEPARTMENT?
OKAY, THANKS.
PLEASE SEND THESE PAPERS FROM THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT TO MR. CONSTIGAN.
YOUR BROTHER IS DOING TWICE THIS AMOUNT EVERY DAY.
DOES MY BROTHER DO THIS SAME KIND OF WORK?
OH WELL, THAT'S FRED FOR YOU.

MICK, HAVE YOU SETTLED INTO YOUR JOB YET?
YEAH, DAD IT'S GOING ALL RIGHT.
YOU'RE GETTING A REPUTATION IN THE COMPANY FOR BEING AS SMART AS YOUR BROTHER FRED..
THANKS.
THIS WAY, I CAN RETIRE WITHOUT CONCERN.
I CAN LEAVE THE COMPANY TO YOU AND FRED...
HOW ARE YOU GETTING ALONG WITH TRACY? HAVE YOU TALKED ABOUT MARRIAGE YET?
WELL, YEAH...
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT, DAD.
SHE'S A NICE GIRL-- FROM A GOOD FAMILY. AND MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL, SHE LOVES YOU A GREAT DEAL.
I'LL FEEL EASY, TOO, WHEN YOU'VE MARRIED HER.

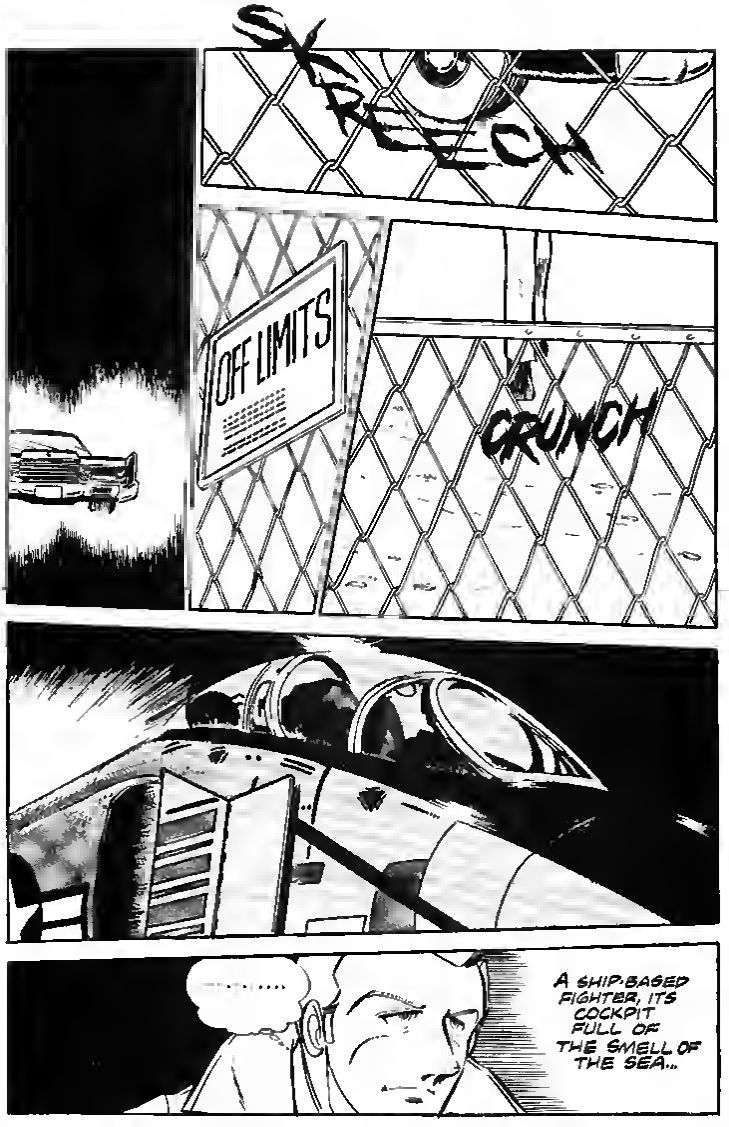
THE SUNSET IN VIETNAM WAS THE COLOR OF BLOOD... BUT IT WAS BEAUTIFUL...
THE SUNSET IN NEW YORK IS THE COLOR OF PEACE... BUT IT LOOKS DULL...
WHAT?! BEN HASN'T COME BACK YET?!
YEAH, HE WAS LOST WHEN WE WERE FLYING OVER THE GULF OF TONGKING
FSSH
HEY, MICK! WHAT'RE YOU DOING WITH OUR BEER?!
BEER
BEN'S SUCH A DRUNKARD, HE'LL COME BACK WHEN HE SMELLS ALCOHOL.
LET'S SPRINKLE BEER ON THE DECK!!

AH HA HA... DO IT! DO IT!
HA HA HA HA
COME BACK, BEN-- YOU DRUNKARD!
HEY! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?
OKAY! LET'S ALL SHOUT TOWARD THE SUNSET TOGETHER!
HEY!! BENJAMIN!! THERE'S BEER HERE!!
IT'S COLD AND TASTES GREAT, BEN!!
COME ON, BEN! THIS ONE'S FOR YOU!!
BEN!! HERE'S THE BEER!!

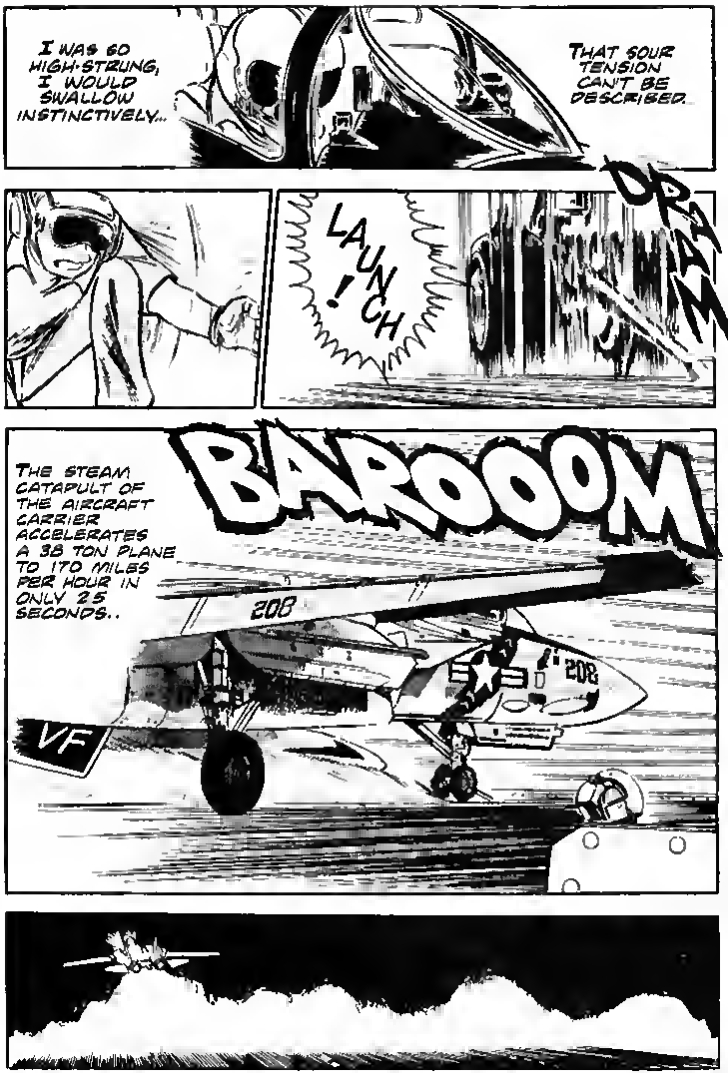

HE MADE IT !!
AH HA HA HA !! HE CAME BACK FOR THE BEER!
YA
A
A
Y
HEY, BEN !! DON'T STAGGER BEFORE YOU'VE HAD YOUR BEER!

IT WAS A BIG JOB, CLEANING THE DECK LATER...
AHHH, WHAT A WASTE, SPRINKLING ALL THAT BEER!
HEY, BEN !!
YAAY
WHAT'RE YOU SAYING? WE DID IT TO BRING YOU BACK! YOU GOTTA THANK US!
WHEW! I MADE IT! I THOUGHT I WAS GOING TO BE A DEAD MAN.
AHHAHA HA HA
SOMEBODY GIVE ME A BEER!
HE SAID IT! HE SAID IT!!
GIVE HIM A BEER !

NO... I WAS JUST REMEMBERING SOMETHING..
WHAT?
YOU'RE ALWAYS STARING OFF INTO SPACE LIKE THAT.
NO, YOU'RE NOT REMEMBERING SOMETHING.. YOU'RE LIVING IN YOUR PAST.
TRACY
I KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING!
EVEN THOUGH YOUR BODY'S HERE, YOUR MIND IS STILL BACK IN VIETNAM!
YOU THINK OF PEACE WHEN YOU'RE FIGHTING... AND THINK OF WAR WHEN YOU'RE AT PEACE...
YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE LOOKING AT THE OTHER SIDE..
....
YOU CAN'T LIVE ANY OTHER WAY...
YOU'RE ALWAYS LOOKING AT A MIRAGE. A BLUE MIRAGE, FAR AWAY IN THE SKY...

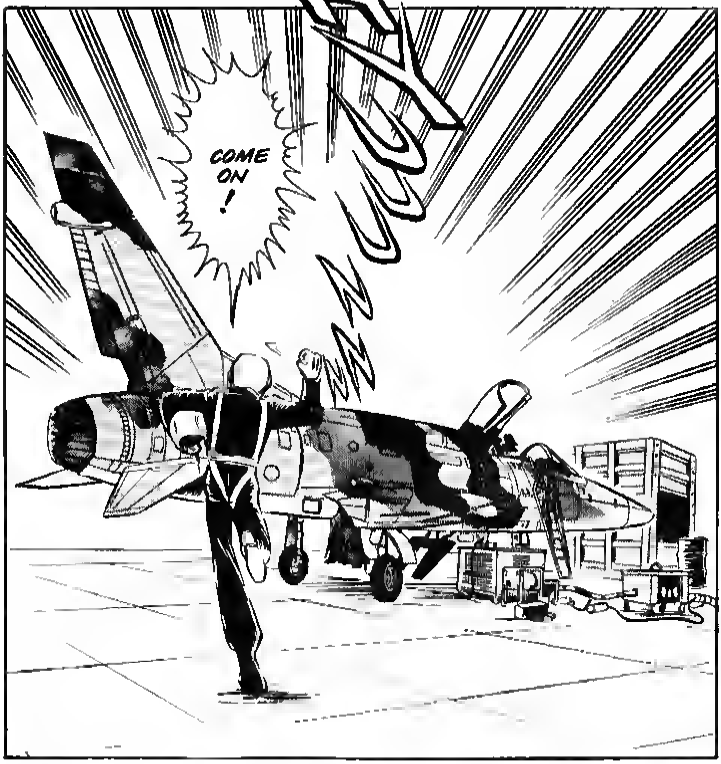

SKREECH
OFF LIMITS
CRUNCH
A SHIP-BASED FIGHTER, ITS COCKPIT FULL OF THE SMELL OF THE SEA...

STAND BY !!
START THE ENGINE !
THE BRIDLE CABLE WAS ATTACHED TO THE PLANE I COULD FEEL THE VIBRATIONS IN THE COCKPIT...
B.U.R.R.E.E.
GOOD LUCK! COME BACK SAFELY !
YEAH !
I ROSE UP INTO THE SKY, PREPARED TO MEET MY FATE...
BA ROOM
LAUNCH !
I'D FEEL A VIBRATION IN MY STOMACH FROM THE SOUND OF MY FELLOWS' JET ENGINES. THE DECK OFFICER WOULD RAISE HIS HAND...


I WAS SO HIGH-STRUNG, I WOULD SWALLOW INSTINCTIVELY..
THAT SOUR TENSION CAN'T BE DESCRIBED.
LAUNCH!
DRAG
THE STEAM CATAPULT OF THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER ACCELERATES A 38 TON PLANE TO 170 MILES PER HOUR IN ONLY 2.5 SECONDS..
BAROOOM
208
VF

AREA 88, NORTH AFRICA
BURNER ON! MILITARY POWER MAX!
SO LONG, TRACY... WE ARE LIVING IN TWO SEPARATE WORLDS...
875

SHAROOOM
mumble
$ $ $
mumble
HEY, SHIN! YOU'RE GOING OUT WITH THE SECOND ATTACK SQUAD TODAY, RIGHT?
I'M GONNA BE IN THE FIRST SQUAD.
I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU. I'M GONNA GET ALL THE TARGETS TO MYSELF!
YEAH, THAT'S RIGHT.



A WARRIOR RACES TOWARD ADVENTURE... FAR OFF IN THE SKY... THE BLUE MIRAGE OF AN IMPOSSIBLE DREAM...